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Katrina: Social tragedy benefits exploiters, devastates workers

Hundreds of thousands of workers face untold misery after they were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and the flooding that wrecked much of New Orleans in its aftermath. It may be months before many of those displaced from coastal Louisiana and Mississippi are allowed to return to what remains of their homes. However, things are looking much more promising for business. Owners of office space throughout the Gulf Coast region are doing record business; hotels are charging top dollar for shabby units; oil companies are enjoying windfall profits as the wonders of capitalism transform their damaged (and fully insured) refineries and drilling platforms into a price bonanza for energy suppliers.

Stock prices for major contractors Halliburton and Baker Hughes – which also have been making out like bandits from the carnage of the Iraq war – skyrocketed as they joined in the scramble to profit off this tragedy. A Sept. 6 story in the *New York Times* celebrated the business opportunities, even as it cautioned that some “are wary about seeming too gleeful in light of New Orleans’ misery.”

“I always hate to talk about positives in a situation like this,” Tetra Technologies CEO Geoffrey Hertel told the *Times*, “but this is certainly a growth business for the next 6 to 12 months.” Tetra repairs oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

Let no one believe this was a natural disaster. The hurricane itself may have been a force of nature, although most scientists who study the earth’s changing climate believe that the frequency and intensity of hurricanes has increased sharply as a result of global warming – that is, as a result of the capitalists’ reckless plundering and destruction of our planet. (Similarly, the flooding was worsened because the government has for years ignored environmentalists’ warnings that the wetlands and harbor islands needed to buffer New Orleans from storms were being destroyed.)

But there was ample opportunity to evacuate before the hurricane struck, and even more time before the flooding that caused the bulk of the carnage. Hundreds of thousands loaded their possessions in their cars, grabbed some cash, and headed out of town to wait the storm out. A few refused to leave their homes. But tens of thousands had no choice. They did not have cars in which to make the journey, nor funds with which to buy fuel (the price of which was already skyrocketing), nor credit cards with which to book a hotel room in some strange city, far from family and friends. This was a private-sector evacuation, open only to those with the economic means to participate. The poor were left to fend for themselves, as best they could.

To be sure, the city told them to take shelter in the Convention Center and the SuperDome, but once there they were abandoned to their plight, without food or water or medical attention. Quite simply, to those who make the decisions in this society their lives were of no importance and they were left to die.


But they refused.

People broke into stores and took what they needed to survive. (Some, it seems, may also have taken some of the luxuries which had long been denied them.) They shared what they found, and treated each other’s injuries as best

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Monday, October 24 is Take Back Your Time Day

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U.S. workers sinking deeper into poverty

While the Bush Administration and the boss press celebrate the “economic boom” and the Federal Reserve continues to hike interest rates to keep the economy from overheating, record numbers of U.S. workers have fallen into poverty.

According to a new report from the U.S. Census Bureau, family income stagnated for the fifth straight year in 2004 and the poverty rate rose for the fourth year in a row.

The poverty rate in 2004 was 12.7 percent, meaning that 37 million Americans were officially living in poverty – up 1.1 million from 2003. Poverty rates are much higher for children, at 17.8 percent. The Census Bureau sets the poverty rate for a family of four at \$19,307.

Inflation-adjusted income of the median household was down slightly last year, even though the average worker put in longer hours as bosses have expanded production to take advantage of the economic recovery. Increased hours were offset by lower wages. Half of all workers earn more than the median income, half less. While most reports focus on average income (which meshes the income of the millionaire and the maid who cleans his mansion), the median gives a better picture of what is happening to real workers.

Income fell for the bottom 60 percent of the U.S. population, was essentially un-

changed for the fifth above them, and rose sharply for those at the top. The share of total income going to the top 5 percent continued to climb, from 21.4 percent in 2003 to 21.8 percent. The top fifth of U.S. households now receive 50.1 percent of all income. While the average real income of middle-income households fell slightly (down \$300, to \$44,455), that of households in the top 5 percent grew by over \$4,000 (to \$264,387) last year. Those in the top 1 percent did much better.

The overall number of Americans without health insurance increased for the fourth year in a row, up 6 million since 2000, to 45.8 million. In 2000, 63.6 percent of the population had some form of employment-based health coverage; that rate is now 59.8 percent. Though some workers were picked up by government programs, 19 percent of all U.S. workers were uninsured in 2004.

Workers’ productivity continues to rise, as do pretty much all economic indicators except wages and benefits for the workers who produce society’s wealth. But four years of capitalist “prosperity” has pushed many workers to the brink. How much longer will we continue to support the bosses, as we and our fellow workers languish in poverty surrounded by the wealth we have created?

This article is based on data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute, www.epinet.org.

Solidarity is key to win Northwest Airline strike

Northwest mechanics and cleaning crews remain solidly united as their strike against massive concessions that would cost most workers their jobs enters its second month. Unable to entice strikers to cross the picket lines, Northwest began hiring permanent replacements Sept. 13, and has contracted out nearly all of its cleaning work.

Delta and Northwest airlines filed for bankruptcy Sept. 14, after unions balked at the carriers’ demands for another round of deep pay cuts, lay-offs and other concessions. While Northwest has said it will refuse to deal with the mechanics during the bankruptcy proceedings, this stance is illegal.

In the most recent round of contract talks, Northwest said it was willing to keep only 1,080 mechanics’ jobs; most mechanics and all aircraft cleaner and custodian positions represented by the union would be outsourced, eliminating 3,181 positions that existed before the strike. Northwest had originally demanded “only” 2,000 lay-offs, so it is clearly feeling emboldened by the way other union workers have been waltzing across the mechanics’ picket lines.

Even though it would cost more than three-fourths of its members their jobs, the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association negotiating team said it was willing to present Northwest’s proposal for a vote, but ultimately withdrew from contract talks when Northwest refused to offer an acceptable severance package for the workers who would lose their jobs and insisted on intolerable working conditions for the survivors of this industrial carnage.

Although dozens of baggage handlers, ground crew and flight attendants have honored AMFA picket lines, massive union scabbing has allowed Northwest Airlines to keep its planes flying with a mix of 1,200 scabs, about 350 managers who are licensed mechanics, and outside maintenance firms

– even if at such a heavy cost that the carrier has been pushed into bankruptcy.

The Machinists and pilots unions have directed their members to scab; the independent Professional Flight Attendants Union (which only represents workers at Northwest) officially supports the strike but is not honoring picket lines. The Teamsters have told their members they are on their own as far as the picket lines go, but have had the decency to cancel staff travel plans on the struck carrier.

Since the strike began, the AFL-CIO has issues mealy-mouthed statements of support for the workers, while refusing to support the strike itself. On the eve of the strike the AFL issued a memo warning that, “AMFA may ask CLCs and State Feds for support: food banks, money, turnout at AMFA picket lines and at rallies etc. State Feds and CLCs should not provide AMFA with such support, unless the national AFL-CIO instructs them to do so.” Far from encouraging solidarity, AFL-affiliated unions have been doing all in their power to disrupt local solidarity efforts.

The newly independent Change to Win Coalition unions, which include thousands of airline workers in their ranks, have made no official mention of the strike.

Meanwhile, the CWA-affiliated Association of Flight Attendants is trying to raid the independent union which represents 9,600 Northwest flight attendants, making not-so-veiled threats that other airline unions will scab should they be forced to strike, leaving them to fight alone just like the mechanics. This threat might be more persuasive if AFL-affiliated unions had a better record of honoring each others’ picket lines.

Northwest is demanding more than \$150 million a year in concessions from the flight attendants, including outsourcing international flights to cheaper overseas crews and

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Change to Win: Fighting the real enemy or losing business

If the “business” of business unions is labor market manipulation, then cooperation of the internationals formerly affiliated with the AFL-CIO will have to do more to unify in the face of the real enemy – globalization, which most directly affects markets through trade agreements.

A unity beyond what John L. Lewis-style demagogues or pro-labor politicians can provide. Even though they may be able to organize as they should within industries and, as they say, internationally across them, a Change to Win coalition could not have saved the steel industry without special protectionist trade agreements to help. For that matter, labor unity has not coalesced in the pitiful fight with the airline companies. (One union stands alone to protect its picket at airports, the AFL-CIO having given written authorization for their workers to cross it.)

Some CTW reps say that the money spent to coerce politicians in the lobby or for electioneering should be utilized for organizing, but that either/or argument is far too simplistic. The funds used to make political deals with Democrats has required workers to support policies that cost thousands of manufacturing jobs. The AFL-CIO and all the CTW unions poured millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours to help Kerry.

Workers ask the question: without a significant number of union voters how can such a union saint ever be elected? Union members

In November We Remember

The November IW remembers the struggles of those who have come before us – in particular of Wobblies imprisoned and murdered by the bosses in their efforts to crush the IWW. Members wishing to place greeting ads in that issue should submit them no later than Oct. 15. Suggested donation levels are \$10 for a 1 inch tall ad (1 column wide); \$35 for 4 inches by 4 7/8 inches (2 columns); or \$80 for a quarter page.

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face new fears every day when going to the bargaining table, ask: How will electioneering save us from layoffs, workplace injuries or pension sabotage? How can workers forget that 15 Democrats voted for CAFTA? Will these lawmakers remember who funded them when the new coalition asks for support?

Nor will workers see the new federation signify an ideological change, a grand new ideal, or a change in demographics. If AFL-CIO organizing conferences have been failures over the years, how can the CTW coerce cooperation between the internationals who have reportedly already begun raiding each other? Will any union member believe that other unions will be restricted through agreements made by their internationals?

Any worker might ask what happened to the ideas set forth in the “Immodest Proposal” by the SEIU’s Stephen Lerner that inspired discussion that some say was used as the rationale for the split. If the AFL-CIO has not become the unified labor movement that Lerner criticized, what can a new federation with limited accountability to one another do to organize at the local level and decentralize? To be sure CTW from the start was not going to bring an inspired ideological change, move in a progressive direction, or further unions’ accountability to workers. If the new strategy is to dictate to locals how they will organize to keep them unified across an industry, the enormous bureaucracies that run the internationals will indeed become even more hierarchical.

The extent to which CTW internationals force each other to adhere to mutual agreements concerning territories and chosen industries to organize without the restrictions in Rules 20 and 21 of the AFL-CIO, may de-

termine whether competition between unions will advantage the large corporations against whom CTW hopes to unify across sovereign boundaries. You can’t tell me that workers in locals will benefit from competition among the internationals.

In Boston several rank and file formed a picket and rallied in the driveway of the Marriott hotel (a well-known union buster) where the CEO of Wal-Mart was to speak to community business leaders. UFCW, SEIU, CWA, AFL-CIO officials, and Jobs With Justice organizers shouted out anti-WalMart slogans telling the nefarious corp to leave town.

Union leaders spoke to the marchers about unity against the enemy and romanticized the struggle. These spectacles symbolize a united front between politicians looking for publicity and business union leaders seeking recognition deals, building their voter base and treasuries.

At a recent forum held in Boston organized by the Democratic Socialists of America – with Jobs with Justice, union reps from CWA, IBEW and Teamsters organizers on the panel – related their thoughts on the split from the AFL-CIO and the formation of the Change To Win coalition. Respondents at the DSA/JWJ event spoke about the need for a ‘big idea’ – a new idea to bring the unions together in movement like the thirties.

I say that workers have the idea and it’s not Gomperish volunteerism for the cause or labor market fundamentalism left over from the 19th century, as one observer noted. After 100 years, you’d think they would use one good, big idea – help workers build industrial unions to utilize the general strike.

Mark Wolff, Boston

Wobblies versus the A.F.L.

As Labor Day approaches, I’ve been thinking more about the radical Industrial Workers of the World, who are celebrating

their 100th anniversary this month. In its Preamble, the IWW boldly asserts “the working class and the employing class have nothing in common.” The Wobblies spoke angrily of the conservative AFL, led by Samuel Gompers, as the “American Separation of Labor.”

This fragmentation or “separation” of the working class could be seen painfully at the recent AFL-CIO convention, also held in Chicago, commemorating the federation’s 50th anniversary.

But in contrast to the IWW’s call for solidarity a hundred years earlier, the working class witnessed a union coming apart at the seams. First the Teamsters and the Service Employees (SEIU) jumped ship, followed by the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). Sounding a lot like Samuel Gompers, Andy Stern of the SEIU stated that when the AFL joined with the CIO in 1935, it did so in the midst of an industrial economy and with a sort of class struggle agenda. “But the workers in today’s economy,” Stern continues, “are not looking for unions to cause problems; they’re looking for them to solve them and this means... business, labor and government all begin to work together. We need Team America to really work together.”

Team America? At a time when a government-corporate alliance is lashing out against union rights, civil rights and social rights, such words seem hollow indeed.

Much more convincing are the words of the IWW in 1905 when they prophetically warned of “one set of workers pitted against another for wage wars” and “the employing class misleading workers into the belief that workers and employers have common interests.” Working people, suffering under a reactionary and anti-worker Bush administration, can learn a great deal from the legacy of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Donald E. Winters, Minneapolis

This letter was submitted to local papers.



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Scottish Wobblies continue fight for wages

Worldwide protests against the Scottish Parliament's decision to stop payment of one month's wages to 15 workers represented by the IWW and the National Union of Journalists have led parliament officials to claim that they do not intend to suspend the workers' pay or benefits. "The sanctions agreed by the parliament apply to the four [Scottish Socialist Party] MSP's only and the salaries of their staff will continue to be paid by the Scottish Parliament," Tony Reilly of the Office of the Presiding Officer wrote one IWW branch.

Unfortunately, this is an outright lie. The staff are paid from MSP allowances. This allowance has been reduced by one-twelfth, so although workers continue to be paid (as the MSPs will not cooperate in cutting off their staff's wages) immediately, the money will run out before the end of the financial year.

Fellow Worker Barbara Scott of the Parliament job branch asked that we convey their thanks to U.S. Wobblies for their letters, emails and other solidarity efforts.

IWW and Party representatives were barred from the meeting that decided to bar the SSP delegation from Parliament for the month of September and cut off their funding, ostensibly in retaliation for a silent protest during which the Socialist MSPs held a banner in the Parliament chamber calling upon the government to honor its promise to allow protests at the G-8 summit.

Parliament officials have yet to offer a justification for their decision to punish workers for the (in this case justified) actions of their employers.

Around Our Union

Several troqueros and other activists joined the **Los Angeles** IWW contingent in a 4,000-worker-strong Labor Day parade in Wilmington, where the port is located. Chants and banners in English and Spanish ("la lucha obrera non tiene fronteras," "dignidad y respeto para la clase obrera," etc.) were well received.

Following the march, the troqueros met in a nearby parking lot while other Wobblies set up a literature booth, speaking with many workers during the picnic that followed. The troqueros are reaching out to workers in ports along the West Coast (and also in Central America) to build support for a new strike.

The **Madison** General Membership Branch contributed \$100 toward expenses of a caravan organized by farmers and labor activists to deliver relief supplies to grassroots organizations serving refugees from Hurricane Katrina. The caravan departed Madison Sept. 15, en route to Covington, Louisiana, where Veterans for Peace has established relief operations.

The **Milwaukee** GMB marched as a union in the Milwaukee Labor Day parade, bringing a working-class message to a march featuring floats such as one from the Musicians' Union playing "There's No Business Like Show Business." GMB members also tabled Sept. 10 at Center Street Daze, an annual street party held in the Riverwest section of the city.

Toronto Wobblies are reorganizing, and workers at Libra Information Services, which operates www.TorontotheBetter.net, a web site for progressive businesses and shoppers, are suggesting IWW affiliation to worker-members of the Ontario Worker Co-op Federation. Says Libra's Taodhg Burns, "The IWW offers the real possibility of progressive unionization for many workers in micro-enterprises that are off the radar screen of the large unions."

A **Philadelphia** IWW organizer has won unemployment benefits, after Whole Foods challenged his eligibility claiming he had been fired for "stealing" food rather than for union activity. In an appeals hearing, managers conceded that the food did not belong to Whole Foods and was headed for the trash. The South Street Workers Union grievance committee is working with workers along the busy retail strip.

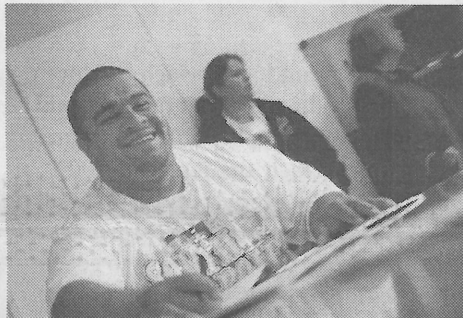
New IWW contract at Community Conservation Centers

BY KYLE GLEASON

Workers at Community Conservation Centers, a buyback recycling yard in Berkeley, California, signed a new contract September 15. The workers entered the bungalow-style office at noon for the signing of the contract. The crew had voted to approve the contract the previous week 19 - 3. This is the third union contract signed at CCC since the IWW won union recognition in early 2001 after a march on the boss and an NLRB election.

The new contract raises the starting wage from \$10.15 to \$11.05 and increases the yearly wage raise from 25 cents to 50 cents. Workers will be paid their new wages, which were raised about \$1 on average, retroactively from August 1. The co-pay for doctors' visits was reduced to \$20 from \$30, although management had earlier signed a tentative agreement to reduce the co-pay to \$15. The union made this compromise to ensure that the lowest-paid workers received a sufficient immediate raise and to guarantee retroactive pay.

A provision was also written into the contract to allow workers to be paid for a full day's work in the event that management allow them to leave work early on eight specified holidays including Cinco de Mayo and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Although this is a supplementary benefit in addition to the nine paid holidays recognized in the contract, there is no guarantee that management will honor them. The union was able to maintain the \$100 work boot stipend that management had tried to take from the employees and strengthened contract language



PHOTOS: KYLE GLEASON

regarding workers' rights to honor any and all picket lines.

In a step toward more effective industrial organizing, the union obtained a contract expiration date aligned with expiration of the Ecology Center contract in December 2007. The Ecology Center is a curbside recycling collection company located in the same industrial yard as Community Conservation Centers; its workers have been represented by the IWW since 1988.

The two companies have a contractual relationship with one another as well as the City of Berkeley. Prior to the expiration of the union contracts in 2007, the two companies will be negotiating long-term contracts with the city. Long-term contracts will increase stability for the companies, and allow the union to apply greater pressure on the bosses to win concessions. Entering into a contract fight simultaneously, workers at the two shops will be able to engage in unified tactics and joint direct action, increasing their strength. The power of the IU 670 workers will be concentrated and they will be actively building the bonds of solidarity across the industry.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

- ☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ☐ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Northwest strike needs solidarity...

continued from page 1

hiring nonunion crews to work small aircraft. The changes would eliminate more than half of flight attendant jobs.

Growing solidarity

Despite attempts to isolate the Northwest strikers, solidarity actions are slowly taking root. Thousands of strikers and their supporters rallied across from the Northwest hangar at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International airport Aug. 27, including many uniformed Northwest flight attendants. The flight attendants' union president spoke at the rally, and the union is encouraging members to join solidarity rallies and defending flight attendants who have been fired for refusing to cross AMFA picket lines.

The United Auto Workers have donated \$880,000 in strike relief funds. In an implicit rebuke to other unions which have been actively undermining the strike, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger said, "Northwest Airlines' behavior toward AMFA is blatant union-busting and an insult to every American worker. The UAW is proud to offer this support to AMFA members."

Members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union have been joining AMFA picket lines on the West Coast, and labor councils in Alameda County, San Francisco and Northwest Oregon have passed motions of support. (The IWW has also adopted a resolution, which is published on page 6.)

Hundreds of supporters joined striking mechanics at San Francisco International Airport on Labor Day. Airline mechanics and

flight attendants from American Airlines, United Airlines and other carriers not only joined the rally but spoke in solidarity. Most significantly, IAM strikers and local union officials joined the rally. The Machinists' NWA Grievance Committee Chairperson Janice Sisco spoke, saying that all units were threatened by the attack on the mechanics. AMFA District Council 9 President Joe Prisco also spoke, declaring that AMFA would honor all picket lines as a matter of principle no matter what union was involved.

Absent were Bay Area AFL-CIO and Change To Win leaders, even though they had acceded to rank-and-file pressure to pass a resolution supporting the strike.

In Detroit, IBEW, IWW, UAW and other unionists had been planning an August 27 benefit for the strikers at IBEW Local 58's hall, which they have used for several labor solidarity events over the years. When Machinists officials learned of the event, they called the local to demand that it be cancelled. Local 58 officials explained that they had rented the hall to a community organization, so the IBEW international stepped in and ordered them to lock the hall to prevent the event from taking place.

A new venue had to be found and publicized on 30 hours' notice, and it was. A local bar lent its kitchen for the cooking and two Detroit night spots opened their doors Saturday evening, accommodating 500 strike supporters. Outraged IBEW officials demanded that the local turn over the burglar alarm company's records to prove that the hall had not been used for the purpose of supporting



Milwaukee IWW members tabling at Center Street Daze, an annual street party held in the Riverwest section of the city. L-R: FWs Brian Toner, Glasgow, and Diane Reynolds, Greg Lampark and Mandie Jobs, all of Milwaukee GMB.

photo: Skip Porter

workers fighting to defend their jobs.

Many Northwest aircraft may be unsafe. A Federal Aviation Administration inspector who raised serious concerns about maintenance problems in the first days of the strike was reassigned after the airline complained. Minnesota-based FAA inspector Mark Lund wrote that the situation at Northwest "jeopardizes life or property." The FAA downplayed the warning, noting that Lund is active in the union representing inspectors.

Despite the courageous actions of dozens of workers to honor the AMFA picket lines (more than offset by union scabbing that has gone far beyond the normal treachery – in

one case a Northwest pilot actually moved equipment on the ground in order to get his scab plane ready for take-off), the picket lines have not shut the carrier down. Northwest is canceling many flights, and on some days more than half of its flights have been delayed by 15 minutes or longer. And in order to fill its flights, Northwest is increasingly relying on code sharing (particularly through its Delta partner) and budget booking systems (which do not identify the carrier until after tickets are purchased) to lure passengers onto its planes under false colors.

Yet while the growing solidarity is heartening evidence that many rank-and-file workers are repulsed by the union scabbery and jurisdictional squabbling that has left the mechanics to fight on their own, if the strike is to be won the airline will have to be shut down. Ideally this would be done by other Northwest workers honoring the picket lines. If not, mass picketing will be necessary. If AMFA is defeated in this fight, it will touch off a renewed wave of concessions demands throughout all industry. In this case, as is so often the case, an injury to one really is an injury to all.

British Air strikers sold out

BY JOHN KALWAIC

In August the busy airport of Heathrow was brought to a halt when ground staff at British Airways, the world's largest airline, went on strike to show solidarity with 670 workers sacked by Gate Gourmet. BA's in-flight meal provider replaced the workers with lower-paid temporary staff. This strike resonated with BA workers across the world, posing a danger for both the corporations and Britain's large business unions.

Within a few hours, before the strike had a chance to spread, the Transport and General Workers Union condemned the strike as "unofficial" and a threat to its partnership with Gate Gourmet and British Air – effectively selling out the workers they are supposed to represent. TGWU leader Tony Woodley assured British Air that he did not support the strikers; management has since suspended two shop stewards and is initiating disciplinary procedures against a third.

While some "leftists" claimed the union was supporting Gate Gourmet workers, in fact it was simply negotiating terms for severance packages. Despairing of preserving their jobs, several hundred workers put in for "voluntary" redundancy. Gate Gourmet will pick and choose from their ranks, and says it will in any event not reinstate workers it considers "hardliners" or "militants." Union bureaucrats were quick to claim victory, but hundreds of workers have lost their jobs and Gate Gourmet can now push through concessions workers had previously voted down.

Although the Gate Gourmet workers have been sold out by their union, we should remember the ground workers who showed solidarity and demonstrated once again that workers have the power to shut down the employers, if we only organize to use it.

Without members' emails, unions are paper tigers

BY ERIC LEE

Seven years ago, I was talking about the Internet to leaders of one of Britain's largest unions. I suggested that we consider sending out a mass mailing – by post – to inform the union's members about our new web site. "Can't do it," they said. "It costs too much money." It turned out the union simply could not afford to send mail to each of its members, and its only regular communication with members was its quarterly magazine.

It struck me then that a union which is unable to communicate with its members is powerless. Imagine if the union needed urgently to get all its members to do something, such as to send protest messages to the government about something. A union which cannot contact the vast majority of its members within a reasonable period of time is not serving its members properly. Why have big national unions at all if this is the case?

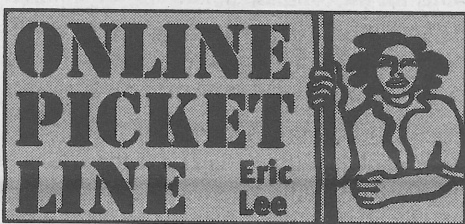
That was seven years ago. Now, everything is different. In modern industrialized societies, the vast majority of our union members will have access to email. For large national unions, this means the problem is solved. There's little or no cost involved in writing to every single union member whenever a union leadership feels the need to.

Except that there's one little problem here.

In general, unions don't have the email addresses of their members.

There are obvious exceptions. Unions of academics often do. So do flight attendants' unions in some places. But my experience with British and other unions shows that these are exceptions. Most unions have extensive databases of their members, including home addresses, phone numbers, and so on, but very few have email addresses of all or most of their members. An even smaller number make use of those email addresses.

Some are prevented from doing so because of the very nature of the union. I know one large blue-collar union in Canada which not only doesn't have its members email addresses, it doesn't even have their names. That information is collected by local branches and is not shared with the national union. As a result, if the national union wants



to communicate with all its members, it has to do so indirectly, through the locals.

Recently I met with the communications director in one of Europe's largest unions – a union which has an excellent web site, which campaigns and in general seems on the ball with communications. But when I asked about how many email addresses of members the union had collected, I was met with a blank stare. While some specific sectors may be organized that way, and while locals might have done this, the national union has nothing like it.

In the USA, I was shown the email campaigning system of one of the country's most effective unions. It was truly impressive, and the union had in fact collected a tremendous number of email addresses for its members. Nevertheless, three-quarters of the membership either did not have email addresses (unlikely) or were not sharing this information with the union.

Unions need the email addresses of all their members in order to be effective. In the twenty-first century, unions that don't have those addresses are like paper tigers.

Here are some ways they can go about getting members' email addresses:

1. When signing up new members, make sure to collect their email addresses. Make it a required field. Potential members who don't have email addresses should be given addresses by their union. If they don't have computers or access to computers, local unions should make sure that they know how to get access – in their union hall, public libraries, wherever. In many unions, turnover of membership is so high that merely by collecting the email addresses of new members, within a few years the union will be able to reach all its members.

2. Incentivize the branches. I spoke the other day with an organizer for a small British union who told me that local organizers are actually paid for every new member they recruit. I don't know how common this is, but it struck me that unions should think

of ways to reward locals which produce the most email addresses. That reward could be non-monetary – simply publicly recognizing locals which reach the target of 100%, an email address for every member. But unions should consider other ways of persuading local activists to do their utmost to get email addresses for every member, including prizes and rewards.

3. Run campaigns and competitions online for your union members – and harvest their email addresses in the process. This is what LabourStart does both with its ActNOW campaigns and its annual Labour Web site of the Year competition. Of course it is essential that members opt-in voluntarily, and not be tricked or lied to about this.

4. Sometimes, the employer makes this easier for us, intentionally or not. I've worked with one union whose members all worked in the public sector and for a single employer. That employer gave each worker an email address according to a very specific formula, involving their first name and last name. The union was able to correctly guess the vast majority of the email addresses and generate a mailing list that worked.

5. And here's the most radical solution of all: give those members who agree to be contacted electronically by their union a break. Reduce their union dues. The economic logic is compelling: if I cost the union less money because I don't need to be sent stuff by post (saving on postage, printing, and labour), I should share in the cost saving.

If your union has found other ways to get the email addresses of members, I'd like to know about it.

Of course it's not enough to collect email addresses of members. You have to know what to do with them. I worked with a large British union which discovered to its surprise that it actually had 18,000 email addresses of members. That was a small percentage of the full union membership, but it was still 18,000 people. We were able to do two mass mailings to those members before the union leadership basically ran out of things to say, and the mailings stopped. Amazing, but true.

Collecting the email addresses of members is essential, but it is only the beginning. How to do mass emailings, how to make them effective, what not to do – those will be the subject of a future column.

Montreal hotel workers win through democracy

BY FRIENDS OF NEFAC, MONTREAL

The Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux has reached agreements at 18 Montreal hotels, and is now negotiating for similar agreements at other CSN-represented hotels across the province.

The first weeks of July were a time of intense mobilisation for some 4,000 hotel workers in Montreal. Contracts ended June 30 and workers responded with a week of disruption that began with informational picket lines during extended lunch breaks and culminated July 8 with a 24-hour strike. Sheraton settled with the union an hour before its 400 workers joined the strike; the Hilton reached an identical agreement the next day, while the Omni responded by locking out its 200 workers for nine weeks.

On July 12 a mass meeting set July 15 as the deadline to reach agreements with the remaining hotels. In the end, only the workers at the Plaza Metro Center had to go on strike to force an agreement matching the agreements with the Sheraton and Hilton.

The agreement involves wage increases of 11 percent over three years and abolishes the "wage ladder." After 30 days, everyone working the same job gets the same pay, promoting equality among workers. Instead, workers with more seniority will get more vacation time. Workers will now be entitled to 4 weeks' holiday after seven years on the job, and older workers can choose a three- or four-day work week. Health and pension benefits were also improved.

While many unions have created regional locals and centralized decision-making, the CSN has taken a different route. The Confederation organises on the basis of one workplace, one local. As a result, it has 40 hotel locals across Quebec. To avoid the isolation and weakness this autonomy could generate, CSN unions join in a federation and are deeply involved in coordinated negotiations. Every local negotiates directly with its boss, but – in addition to local demands – they agree on a joint platform which sets baseline demands for creating an industry standard.

The platform and the negotiation protocol must be approved by a vote in all of the member unions. Out of 9,000 CSN members in the hotel industry, 7,000 are currently involved in the coordinated negotiation. Since the idea started in Montreal, only workers in this city currently have contracts expiring at the same time – one of the goals of the current round is to make sure that every other region does the same.

The CSN unions in the hotel industry are living proof that it is possible to organise in the service industry and to materially improve working conditions through coordinated action. Unfortunately, the wisdom of the hotel workers – that unity makes strength – is not yet shared widely across other sectors.

As we go to press, the Omni chain national managers have just settled the strike at its Mont Royal hotel, with workers returning Sept. 20 under terms similar to those reached at other Montreal hotels.

Workers around world fighting Wal-Mart

Workers from California, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nicaragua and Swaziland have filed a class action lawsuit against Wal-Mart in California Superior Court, charging that the retailer failed to meet its contractual duty to ensure that its suppliers pay basic wages due; forced them to work excessive hours seven days a week with no time off for holidays; obstructed their attempts to form a union; and made false and misleading statements to the public about the company's labor and human rights practices. California law bars companies from making false claims to promote their businesses.

Attorneys argue that Wal-Mart's Supplier Standards Agreement, which requires foreign suppliers to follow its corporate code of conduct, creates a contractual obligation enforceable by the workers who are ostensibly the intended beneficiaries of the code's worker rights provisions.

The lawsuit also lists four California plaintiffs, including unionized workers who say Wal-Mart's entry into Southern California, and its unfair business practices, forced their employers to cut pay and benefits.

Wal-Mart is facing several class action law suits across the U.S., including one alleging that the company discriminates against women in pay, promotions and training.

Another class action suit on behalf of 116,000 former and current Wal-Mart employees in California is being tried at press time. That suit charges that the retailer systematically and illegally denied workers lunch breaks. Wal-Mart recently settled a similar lawsuit in Colorado for \$50 million.

California law requires that employees who work at least six hours must have a 30-minute, unpaid lunch break. Otherwise, the law requires they receive an additional hour of pay. Internal company audits show that Wal-Mart knew its stores were routinely violating the law.

Closing union store illegal

The Quebec Labour Board has ruled that the closing of a Wal-Mart store in Jonquière in April amounted to a reprisal against unionized workers and has ordered the company to

compensate former employees. The store was Wal-Mart's first Canadian store to organize, and was closed as workers sought an arbitrator to help reach a first contract.

Wal-Mart claimed the store was unprofitable. However, the company has maintained its lease on the property and made no moves to close the store until after workers sought union recognition.

The United Food and Commercial Workers union, which represented the Jonquière employees, is seeking certification in eight Wal-Mart stores across Quebec and has been certified to represent workers at two other Quebec locations.

In a separate ruling, the labour board rejected Wal-Mart's request for the names of employees who signed up to unionize, saying it needed to keep the names confidential in order to prevent further reprisals.

On Sept. 14 the B.C. Labour Relations Board certified the union at a Wal-Mart Tire & Lube Express in Cranbrook, British Columbia, after a representation election. Applications at two other Wal-Mart tire operations are pending.

UFCW backs "Association" for Wal-Mart workers

With the Teamsters and UFCW's decision to pull out of the AFL-CIO, its planned \$25 million campaign to organize Wal-Mart is dead. However, Change to Win Coalition unions have launched the Wal-Mart Workers Association, which claims to have signed up 200 members since it was founded in July. Members pay \$5 a month in dues.

The group's sponsors include the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, the Service Employees International Union, and Acorn, an advocacy group notorious for union-busting efforts against its own staff.

Acorn's Wade Rathke has been named chief organizer for the Association, which he told the *New York Times* would "aggressively engage the company on their rights and how they are treated."

The Association is targeting Wal-Mart's practice of cutting workers' hours, jeopardizing their limited health benefits and leaving



The IWW: 1905 - 2005

This undated image of a sidehill harvester is one of hundreds of professional photographs of agricultural work in the United States and Canada in the early part of the 20th century from the IWW collections at Wayne State University.

Anyone interested in the collection, or in adding to it, should contact William LeFevre at the Archives at 313-577-2789 or by email at William.LeFevre@Wayne.Edu.

Lock-in, not lock-out CBC workers should take over production facilities and lock themselves in

BY YVES ENGLER, STRAIGHT GOODS

All progressive Canadians should support workers who are currently "locked out" by CBC management. They are fighting an important struggle over the future of public service broadcasting in an era when powerful political and economic forces would be pleased by CBC's demise. Private broadcasters would love to have the airwaves all to themselves.

But lost in the fog of advertising-driven media obfuscation is the reality that this battle is fundamentally about workers' power and independence.

CBC is trying to introduce an extreme top-down model in which a select few managers get to pick and choose whose contract will be renewed. Workers will have no right to their jobs. In the name of "flexibility" the CBC will become the modern equivalent of the scene in many films where Depression-era longshoremen crowd at the gate waiting to be chosen for a shift by all-powerful overseers. (Camera pans across a sea of hungry faces – a finger points at the lucky few. "You, you and you; the rest go home, that's it for today.") Everyone who has seen one of these waterfront movies knows how this system breeds corruption and concentration of power.

The idea of public service broadcasting is that there should be some spots on the dial where commercial considerations are not paramount. Freed from the need to sell soap, journalists can report and artists create with public service as their primary goal. Culture and high quality journalism will flourish.

Of course we know that is the ideal, not the reality, of CBC. But it is important to ask if

already hard-pressed workers unable to pay their bills. But instead of organizing workers on the job to confront the practice, it is urging the state of Florida to grant unemployment benefits to workers whose hours have been cut back by Wal-Mart, arguing that workers who quit because the reduced hours had been constructive discharged. It is also seeking supplemental jobless benefits for workers with reduced hours who remain at Wal-Mart.

Several members of the association told the *Times* that Wal-Mart's health plan has such high premiums and deductibles that they cannot afford to join it. As a result, thousands of Wal-Mart workers receive health coverage through Medicaid.

UFCW Organizing Director William McDonough told the *Times* that they are backing the Association in the hope that it can lay the groundwork for future unionization efforts.

the ideal is more likely to be achieved through management's model of precarious contract workers or by journalists and artists who are relatively secure in their jobs, not constantly trying to "suck up" to their bosses.

(There is a third solution, one used on the West Coast waterfront, a militant union and a joint worker-management hiring hall, but that is not on the current CBC bargaining table. Perhaps next time.)

Workers should seize the initiative and demonstrate that they (and not management) can produce the best public service broadcasting. Instead of accepting being "locked out", workers should "lock themselves in" and run the radio and TV networks themselves for the duration of the dispute.

It would be the modern equivalent of the sit-down strikes and factory occupations that built North America's industrial unions in the 1930s and '40s.

A lock-in would allow CBC workers to demonstrate the depth of their commitment to public service broadcasting. Instead of recirculating government and corporate press releases, CBC journalists could, while locked in, truly question authority.

Workers could ban all politicians and corporate hacks from the news for the duration of the lock-in, and only report on the concerns of ordinary people. Thousands of listeners and viewers could then demonstrate their support for the locked-in workers, by bringing food and supplies to those inside. If the lock-in was lengthy, writers could begin developing TV series about secretaries or construction crews or young people trying to organize their fast-food outlets.

Locked-in journalists could finally take a look at what the Canadian government has really done in Haiti. They could run the film that is available from journalist Kevin Pina that shows Canadian-trained police murdering unarmed demonstrators and UN forces massacring 50 civilians on July 6th.

A "lock-in" protest would have the added benefit of actually putting pressure on politicians who control CBC's purse strings. Do they really care when the current lockout saves money and shuts down the one mainstream source of relatively commercial-free news? The government is certainly feeling no heat from CanWest or Bell GlobeMedia or Quebecor to get the CBC back up and running.

Perhaps, if CBC workers demonstrated through a lock-in what a true public service media could produce, there would be loud cries from those quarters to get the CBC back to normal.

IWW growing with focus on strategic organizing

Members from across the United States and Canada came to Philadelphia over the Labor Day weekend for the IWW's annual General Assembly, hearing (and debating) reports from union officials, discussing organizing initiatives, and nominating candidates who will stand for union-wide election for the coming year.

Among the delegates were folksingers Anne Feeney, who enlivened the proceedings with a number of songs over the weekend, and Utah Phillips, who performed to a standing-room-only crowd Sunday night (and did a benefit house concert for the IWW's South Street Workers Union the next day). A traveling exhibit from the IWW archives at Wayne State University in Detroit lined the walls.

IWW membership income has increased by 35 percent over the last fiscal year, General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss reported to the 2005 General Assembly, as a result of increased organizing throughout the union. Workers at the Free Speech TV network, based in Colorado, recently negotiated their first contract with management. Oregon Wobblies continue organizing computer workers and are chasing down a deadbeat boss who skipped out on several programmers' wages. The Chicago messengers' drive has won some important gains over the last year through a direct action campaign targeting particular grievances.

The campaign among the Stockton rail truckers announced at last year's Assembly is continuing, and recently truckers in some West Coast ports have expressed interest in

joining the IWW as well. And several branches have major campaigns under way among retail and other service sector workers. The New York City-based Starbucks campaign continues to draw significant press attention, while the South Street Workers Union in Philadelphia has developed a grievance committee that has assisted several workers and has a solid base in several stores and restaurants on the South Street corridor. In Vermont, the Montpelier Workers Union recently voted to reaffiliate from the United Electrical workers to the IWW. And several other IWW branches are in the process of launching similar multi-shop campaigns.

"Across the union we are organizing," Buss reported. "We are organizing shops, but more importantly we are organizing workers and giving them the tools to act union on the job. This is the work the IWW was created to do."

Growing membership has created strains as headquarters staff struggles to handle the increased workload. While several delegates suggested new paid positions and other expenses to address various issues, the union is operating at only a very modest surplus and GST Buss warned that we need to be careful not to return to the deficit spending that wiped out the union's financial reserves and plunged us deep into debt in the 1990s.

The last year has also seen a number of events celebrating the IWW's 100th anniversary, ranging from the conference and concert we organized in Chicago in June to IWW participation in conferences and other

IWW
General
Secretary-
Treasurer
Alexis Buss
reported
that IWW
membership
has reached
its highest
point since
the 1940s.



events ranging from Harvard University on the East Coast to the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association meeting in Vancouver. There have been dozens of centenary events, ranging from picnics to art exhibits, from lectures to concerts. An exhibition prepared by William LeFevre at Wayne State University is presently touring North America, and another exhibition just opened at the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan. In October, the North American Labor History conference in Detroit will focus on the IWW, and in November, FW Buss will be speaking in Switzerland and Germany on the IWW. As we move toward issuing a new edition of the IWW Songbook and of our official history, *The IWW: Its First 100 Years*, many opportunities for local events in this centenary year remain.

Industrial Worker editor Jon Bekken reported that circulation continues to slowly increase, but that there is a need for greater membership involvement in writing for the newspaper. His report also raised the question of the need to develop publications to support organizing among workers for whom English is at best a second language. A number of delegates argued that in the interim the newspaper should include articles in other languages when possible. However, as in past years FW Bekken argued against making the *Industrial Worker* a multilingual publication, arguing that the union would do better to develop and support publications in the various languages spoken by the workers among whom we are organizing. Bekken also announced his intention to step down after completing his present term as editor in December 2006, and urged members interested in taking up this work to become active with the newspaper over the coming year in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The International Solidarity Commission reported that it has issued several statements of support for workers' struggles around the world, in particular defending workers in Argentina's self-managed factories faced with repression and raising funds for dozens of workers in Bangladesh's National Garment Workers Federation injured and displaced in the collapse of the Sharihar factory.

The General Executive Board aroused some controversy over its decision to go into executive session at earlier this year to discuss membership applications from workers at two firms which many believed were trying to use the IWW's good name to prey on workers' natural preference for union goods and services. GEB Chair Mark Damron noted that a full report of the executive session deliberations had been made available to the membership over the Board's email list, but several delegates questioned whether the Board had the right to conduct meetings from which the membership was barred and an emergency motion to limit the practice was referred to the Resolutions Committee from the floor.

That Committee later recommended a motion that it was union policy that wherever possible Board meetings should be open to the membership and establishing a committee to draft a proposal establishing limitations on

executive sessions to be presented to the 2006 Assembly. That motion was adopted after a provision requiring a two-thirds vote of the Board to enter executive session was withdrawn when the chair ruled that it violated the IWW Constitution's requirement that all bodies operate by majority vote.

Also adopted was a motion noting that the IWW "was not established to provide a flag of convenience under which unscrupulous firms could prey upon the sympathies of union members" and establishing a committee of three to investigate the firms in question. The IWW retains a roster of all shops authorized to use our union label, several of which are listed in the *Industrial Worker*. Anyone who has been approached by other firms or salesmen representing themselves as IWW-affiliated is urged to notify union headquarters immediately.

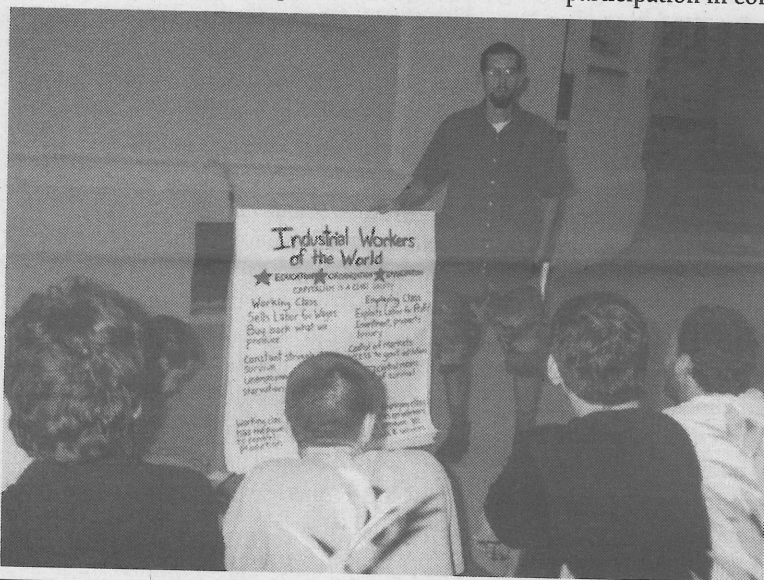
Proposals to establish a committee to develop a nonprofit educational foundation to support the work of the IWW, and to authorize the Austin GMB and the Organizing Department Formation Committee to convene an organizing summit in Austin, Texas, in winter 2006 were also approved, as was a motion of support with striking Northwest Airlines workers published in this issue.

The most controversial topic before the body was the report of the Committee on Industrial Classification, which has been working on a comprehensive overhaul of the IWW's industrial union system over the past three years. Their proposals were extensively discussed at last year's Assembly, but ultimately tabled to this year to allow more time for a union-wide discussion of the extensive report. The Committee's proposal to establish a permanent committee charged with revising that system as industrial needs dictate was rejected, in part out of concern that it would grant too much power to the General Executive Board and the Committee, and in part out of broader opposition to the Committee's proposals that had developed within the union.

A motion to reject the Committee's specific recommendations for overhauling the industrial union system was then adopted. However, Assembly voted to continue the Committee for another year, selecting seven delegates (all new to the Committee) who will offer proposals to the 2006 General Assembly.

Assembly also heard reports from local branches, including on a major campaign at an online grocery firm that employs several hundred mostly Spanish-speaking workers, where the IWW is working with a community-based workers center to build a strong union committee on the job. Chicago Wobblies reported on their campaign to organize the messenger industry, which has won substantial wage hikes at one firm and is also fighting the "independent contractor" system the employers are trying to force on workers in order to evade their responsibilities for injuries, unemployment insurance, and other workers' rights.

The Edmonton branch has been fighting a phony "Christian" union that is signing sweetheart deals with the bosses to



Chicago Wobblies presented their new member orientation program, which explains how the IWW is organized, its ideas, and how to become involved in the union's day-to-day work.

Solidarity with Northwest Airlines strikers

The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the Industrial Workers of the World General Assembly September 4, 2005:

Northwest Airlines workers have been on strike since August 20, in a heroic fight against their employers' demands for concessions that would cost thousands of jobs, endanger public safety, and slash wages by 25 percent.

All workers in the air transport industry have a direct interest in turning back the airlines' insatiable demand for concessions, as do all workers in the United States who already suffer from declining wages and massive cuts to health care and other benefits.

However, the Northwest Airlines workers' struggle has been undercut by union scabbing by other Northwest unions, as well as scabbing by unionized air traffic controllers, catering staff and ground crews employed by other airlines and airports around the world but servicing Northwest flights.

The Industrial Workers of the World was formed 100 years ago to promote solidarity, rather than division, among workers.

Both the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations and the unions grouped in the Change to Win Coalition include in their affiliated unions tens of thousands of workers directly engaged in the air transport industry. Far from calling upon those members to act in solidarity with the Northwest strikers, each has directed their members to actively break the strike by crossing picket lines, handling struck work and otherwise assisting the employers, and have interfered with efforts by affiliated locals to lend aid to their fellow workers at Northwest in their time of need.

In contrast, days before the Northwest strike began, workers at Heathrow Airport in London demonstrated genuine union principles when they shut down British Airways in solidarity with food service workers fired for defending their jobs. Their recognition that An Injury To One Is An Injury To All is the basis upon which the labor movement must be rebuilt.

The response to the Northwest strike demonstrates that the recent split in the AFL-CIO, in which the members had no say, was not about building workers' solidarity and industrial power.

The Industrial Workers of the World, gathered at its 2005 General Assembly in Philadelphia, urges its branches and members – and air transport workers throughout the world – to do all in their power to assist the striking Northwest Airlines workers, including by reinforcing picket lines and refusing to work Northwest airplanes.

The General Assembly further directs the General Secretary-Treasurer to promptly convey to the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association our solidarity in this struggle.

Radical Economics and the Labor Movement

BY JON BEKKEN

More than 50 economists and labor activists went to Kansas City Sept. 15 – 17 for a conference on radical economics and the labor movement organized as part of the IWW centenary. Presentations addressed a wide variety of topics, from historical work to studies of recent efforts by Latin American workers to defend their labor standards through strikes and worker collectives. Other papers sought to update IWW and Marxian economic analysis, reported on initiatives to bring radical economic analysis to broader audiences, and explored the intersection between radical economics and economic thinkers such as Galbraith and Sraffa. In addition, there was a tour of Kansas City labor history sites (shortened by bad weather), culminating in a performance of Wobbly songs in the old City Market by Bob and Judy Sukiel.

The idea was to bring together economists and labor activists for a dialogue which might restore the dialogue between economists and working-class movements that once posed a vital challenge to the dominance of capitalism's house economists. As Dirk Philipsen of Virginia State University noted in his presentation on historical struggles for economic democracy, "It is clear that corporate capitalism is not sustainable. It is not realistic to believe that it can survive." And so there is an urgent need to open a conversation about economic alternatives.

Ric McIntyre and Michael Hillard presented a critique of U.S. industrial relations

theory, noting that recent economic developments have undercut the foundations of the traditional family, creating widespread social disintegration which the right wing has taken advantage of. The labor movement, they argued, needs to integrate issues of home and work, creating community-based organizing campaigns better suited to the modern, dispersed workplace and its workers – many of whom work closely with their managers (and so may have trouble seeing them as enemies) but who nonetheless face systemic problems that are making it increasingly difficult to live any sort of satisfying life.

Claude Pottier of the University of Paris discussed offshore production, opening by noting that everyone thinks the debate is more advanced on the other side of the ocean. While mainstream economists celebrate the emergence of global labor markets, this has had enormous social consequences (notably downward pressure on wages and social standards) which the capitalists have dumped on the broader society. Noel Thompson of the University of Wales looked back to the 1830s to the British union newspaper *The Pioneer*, which laid out an early syndicalist vision focusing on the role of workers in securing their own emancipation at a time when most radicals looked to upper class saviors.

And Fred Lee, an economist and IWW member, presented a controversial paper on the economics of the IWW which argued that we can see in early IWW economic writings a more sophisticated analysis than is commonly



Conference-goers also toured Kansas City labor sites. photo: Stuart Elliott

recognized – one which focuses less on the wage-profit nexus than on struggles over job control. Although it can be difficult to raise real wages under capitalism, especially for the working class as a whole, workers can win real gains in areas such as working conditions and the hours of labor, and in doing so can wrest substantial control over work from the bosses. Struggles for job control give workers control over their lives, Lee said; "job control makes people out of us, instead of children whose lives are controlled by others." The paper sparked lively debate from other economists in the room, who saw wage struggles as the central issue facing workers.

Other presentations addressed the need to take economics out of the academy. Judy Ance reported on a project which toured hard-hit communities throughout the Midwest in the months leading up to the recent elections, educating workers about the connections between trade policy and job losses. Labor

consultant Peter Donohue argued that unions need to adopt a very different approach to organizing, as the traditional staff-driven model (whatever one thinks of its meager results) is simply unaffordable. IWW General Executive Board member Jim Crutchfield stressed the need for accessible materials to bring radical critiques and visions for a non-capitalist economics to ordinary workers. And Charles Reitz and Steve Spartan discussed their work raising issues of economic inequality and its consequences to students and in diversity training workshops.

They suggested that the best way to teach critical economics is to begin with concrete illustrations of wealth and inequality in our society. Among the examples they discussed was Send a CEO to Jail Day, in which students were assigned research questions demonstrating that it would be cheaper to house corporate chieftains in jail than to pay the social cost of allowing them to continue to exploit.

Many of the presentations will soon be available online at <http://cas.umkc.edu/econ/iwwconf/>

Remembering the Tolpuddle martyrs

BY AUSTIN FLETCHER

On February 24, 1834, six English farm workers from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset, were transported to a penal colony in Australia for organising a trade union in defiance of the law. The squire and local judiciary combined to ensure that the men received an exemplary punishment for their crime of "mutiny" against the ruling class.

The repression of the Martyrs arose within the context of the "Swing" riots, a series of popular uprisings against enclosure, starvation, high taxes and the introduction of new technology designed to degrade further the conditions of working people.

So what's changed? Imperial wars, regressive taxes, millionaire judges and brutal automation are still in our lives, as are poverty wages and tyrannical landlords. In many ways the situation has worsened; the current masters of industrial capitalism enjoy a level of wealth and power undreamt of by any provincial squire.

Every year on July 15, thousands meet to honour the memory of the Martyrs at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival. The event is organised by the Trades Union Congress, which can only bring itself to support an unofficial action if it happened over a hundred years ago; current movements against war and capitalism are studiously ignored.

This year Wobblies were in attendance. We went to celebrate the lives of our forbearers, to organise, and to build a future without the wage system. By reclaiming the past we determine our future, and ensure that an alternative to the union as "service corporation" is presented to our fellow workers. I would encourage everyone who can to attend this festival, it provides an opportunity to build solidarity, and to put the IWW back into the collective consciousness of the broader movement.



Anne Feeney closed Saturday's session with her rousing singing.

(New Jersey), Scott Satterwhite (Pensacola), Richard Seymour (Portland), Marcus Tena-glia (Portland), Bruce Valde (Oakland), Ian Wallace (Portland), Adam Welch (San Jose), Matt White (Philadelphia), Evan Wolfson (Pittsburgh). Several other members declined nomination on the floor.

Nominated for International Solidarity Commission were Jon Bekken (Philadelphia), Paul Bocking (Petersboro), Braden Cannon (Ottawa), Eric Chester (Western Massachusetts), Todd Godenow (Portland), Tom Howard (New Jersey), Al Johnstone (UK), John Kalwaic (Philadelphia), Bill McLaughlin (Philadelphia), Peter Moore (British Isles), Steve Winfrey (Pensacola).

Austin TX, Chicago, Edinburgh and the San Francisco Bay Area were nominated as sites for the 2006 General Assembly.

Officers will be elected through union-wide referendum in November.

A combination of parliamentary snafus and sometimes heated debate meant that delegates had to remain for nearly two hours beyond the scheduled adjournment. But most did, and in those two hours delegates dealt with pressing business efficiently and constructively. As always, the Assembly ended with the singing of "Solidarity Forever" after which a number of delegates gathered outside for a presentation of the Chicago branch's new member orientation, while others helped clean up the hall.

IWW Assembly...

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undermine hard-won union standards. The Starbucks campaign is confronting a city-wide reduction in workers' hours apparently meant to weaken union support and force out workers who rely on their jobs to support their families (thus saving on benefits and ensuring a more transient labor force that will be harder to organize). They continue to press grievances in several shops, and recently forced out a particularly anti-worker manager.

The Austin branch has established a solid committee in a local restaurant, which they will use as the base for a larger campaign targeting business in the district. The Madison branch has issued 27 new red cards since January, and has launched a community-based campaign to organize downtown service businesses. And the British Isles ROC reported that they are setting up organizer trainings, strengthening their network of branches, and fighting the Scottish parliament's decision to cut off wages to the IWW job branch that represents several staff. Several branches have launched newsletters, and New York Wobblies are about to take their newsletter bilingual.

Fellow Workers Mark Damron (Cincinnati, Ohio), Ryan Gaughan (Portland, Oregon) and Steven Ongerth (San Francisco Bay Area) were nominated for 2006 General Secretary-Treasurer. Alexis Buss, who has served as GST for six terms, declined to stand for re-election.

Nominated to serve on the 2006 General Executive Board were John Baranski (declined), Ed Borass (Edmonton), Pat Brenner (Waukegan), Alexis Buss (Philadelphia), Jim Crutchfield (New York City), Tim Fasnacht (Philadelphia), Ben Ferguson (New York City), Liam Flynn (Baltimore), Ryan Gaughan (Portland), Harjit Gill Singh (San Francisco), Jeanette Gysbers (Edmonton), Ryan Hemly (San Francisco), Nate Holdren (New Jersey), Tom Howard (New Jersey), Adam Lincoln (British Isles), Pete Little (Portland), Lupin (Portland), Jim McNally (Philadelphia), Nathaniel Miller (Philadelphia), Samuel Morales Jr. (New York City), Eddie Murray (Scotland), Ted Nebus

CEOs making out like bandits

While pay for the bottom 80 percent of American workers has been slowly sinking for years, a new report from United for a Fair Economy and the Institute for Policy Studies reports that the biggest defense contractors have doubled their CEO pay since 9/11.

Pay for CEOs more generally skyrocketed as well. The ratio of average CEO pay (now \$11.8 million) to worker pay (now \$27,460) rose from 301-to-1 in 2003 to 431-to-1 in 2004. At top defense contractors that are publicly traded, and so required to report what they pay their officers, average CEO pay increased 200 percent from 2001 to 2004, versus 7 percent for all CEOs.

For example, David H. Brooks, CEO of bulletproof vest maker DHB Industries, earned \$70 million in 2004, 3,349 percent more than his 2001 compensation of \$525,000. Brooks also sold company stock worth about \$186 million last year. In May, the U.S. Marines recalled more than 5,000 DHB armored vests after questions were raised about their effectiveness. By that time, Brooks had pocketed over \$250 million in war windfalls.

If the minimum wage had risen as fast as average CEO pay over the last 15 years, the lowest paid workers in the U.S. would be earning \$23.03 an hour today, not \$5.15 an hour.

These corporate fat cats are not being paid for results. If you invested in the stock of the company led by the year's single highest-paid CEO each year since 1990, you would have lost money. A \$10,000 investment in such a Greedy CEO portfolio in 1991 would have decreased in value to \$8,079 by the end of 2004, while a similar investment in the S&P 500 would have increased to \$48,350.

Carpenters' notorious autocrat partners with Stern's SEIU

BY HARRY KELBER

Douglas McCarron tightened his control of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners at the union's convention in Las Vegas Aug. 25, when delegates voted to give him a third five-year term. A pro-democratic opposition slate, Restore the Vote, could muster only about 12 percent of the total vote.

Even before the convention, McCarron had amassed enormous power over the union's 550,000 members by transferring the authority of its 2,200 locals to 55 regional councils, whose officers were handpicked by him and conform to his wishes. In effect, he runs the union like it is his personal property, as he did when he quit the AFL-CIO four years ago without a membership vote.

To enshrine his dictatorial powers in the union's constitution, McCarron had the delegates, most of whom are beholden to him for their jobs, pass Section 10m of the newly revised UBC Constitution, which states: "The General President shall have authority to appoint interim officers of newly-established, consolidated or merged Local Unions or Councils" but it also adds two words, "and delegates," thus further consolidating McCarron's tremendous power.

McCarron runs the union like a corporation, claiming that centralized leadership (his) is more efficient and attractive to employers and will produce more jobs for working carpenters.

Opposition to McCarron continues to grow. In British Columbia, angry carpenters voted to exit from the UBC to escape from his

clutches. McCarron is faced with numerous lawsuits challenging his denial of members' rights. But there was no broad movement at the convention to come close to unseating him as president.

So why did the AFL insurgents, representing themselves as reformers, invite McCarron to become one of the seven "partner" unions within the Change to Win Coalition? Is his ruthless, anti-democratic behavior acceptable to unions like the SEIU and UNITE-HERE, which have always prided themselves as being progressive organizations?

What role are the Carpenters expected to play in the organizing strategy of the

Coalition, since they have almost nothing in common with five of its member unions? Or will McCarron, the poster boy of Corporate Unionism, become a model for the other unions in the CTW?

And how will the SEIU and its president, Andy Stern, who have criticized President Bush's domestic and foreign policies, deal with McCarron, who is Bush's darling labor leader, who gets to ride on Air Force One? The president, who has never invited Sweeney or any member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council to the White House, not even for a cup of coffee and a hello, happily attends the Carpenters' Labor Day picnics.

Change to Win Coalition sets convention

The Change to Win Coalition will hold its founding convention in St. Louis Sept. 27.

Meanwhile, the 450,000-member UNITE HERE union joined the Teamsters, Service Employees International and the United Food and Commercial Workers in disaffiliating from the AFL-CIO. Together, the withdrawals have cost the AFL some \$30 million of its annual \$125 million budget and cut membership by more than 4 million workers.

The Laborers and United Farm Workers have endorsed the Coalition but thus far remain inside the AFL-CIO. The independent United Brotherhood of Carpenters will also participate in the St. Louis convention.

Coalition unions say they withdrew in order to focus their efforts on organizing and building union power. However, in New Jersey, the Service Employees and UFCW

are fighting over SEIU Local 32BJ's effort to organize the M. Alfieri Co., one of the state's largest developers of office buildings.

SEIU has been fighting Alfieri development plans to pressure the company to use union janitors. The company responded by hiring a contractor that has a sweetheart contract with UFCW Local 348S, which it recognized after managers distributed UFCW membership applications to workers and threatened to fire those who didn't sign.

"This is a local we've had disputes with before that has substandard contracts," Rob Hill, Local 32BJ's director of organizing in New Jersey, told the *Newark Star-Ledger*. "We're alleging in this case that the employer brought this union in and assisted them illegally in organizing the workers to keep them from organizing with our union."

Katrina...

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they could.

In the hurricane's aftermath, the media spread lurid reports of looters shooting down rescue helicopters and raping children in relief shelters. Most of these reports turn out to have been fabrications. The NPR radio show "This American Life" broadcast interviews with hurricane survivors prevented from escaping the disaster zone by armed police looking to keep African-American survivors out of their white suburbs. "Thank God for the looters," one conventioner said, noting that they not only provided desperately needed food and water but also ferried children and sick people to evacuation centers.

Meanwhile, as people were dying in New Orleans of dehydration and disease, state officials pulled police and National Guard from rescue efforts; instead, they were given "shoot to kill" orders and dispatched to protect property.

We saw two contrasting visions of society in this disaster. Thousands rushed to aid the victims, not asking if there was a buck to be made but rather doing what they could to respond to the urgent human need. People opened their homes to refugees, traveled into danger zones, and emptied their pockets. Meanwhile, gas stations and hotels raised prices to take advantage of the desperate refugees, while politicians left those unable to escape New Orleans to die.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency turned back truckloads of bottled water even as thousands of survivors had gone for days without food or water. FEMA officials ignored reports of thousands of people jammed into the New Orleans Convention Center and on overpasses throughout the city, told the Red Cross to stay out of the city, and left people to die until media coverage forced them to take action.

The one million people from New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast suddenly tossed out of their jobs by Hurricane Katrina are now fanning out across the South and the rest of the country looking for work. In San Francisco, a few have been hired to scab on striking health care workers. Others can hope for work rebuilding the highways and buildings leveled by the storm and flooding. But most were low-wage workers in the casino and tourism industries, filling jobs that will not exist until the region is rebuilt. Before the hurricane hit, nearly a fourth of New Orleans residents lived below the poverty line.

Concerned that the bosses might have to pay too much for that reconstruction work, President Bush has waived a federal law requiring construction contractors receiving federal funds to pay prevailing wages to their workers. Employers have long sought to repeal Davis-Bacon Act requirements, claiming taxpayers could benefit by sending construction work to the lowest bidder and paying rock-bottom wages. Eliminating prevailing wage requirements also has the advantage of creating huge cost differentials between unionized and non-union contractors, effectively replacing union workers with workers who lack union protection and so must cut corners and do slipshod work to meet the bosses' demands for more profits.

As always, there is money to be made (and votes to be hustled) off human suffering. These parasites will be with us so long as we tolerate an economic system based upon greed and exploitation.

But we can see the basis for another system in the actions of those who continue to reach out to aid those in need. As always, they are the vast majority, but it is the parasites who hold the levers of power. In this time of crisis, we must of course extend our solidarity to our fellow workers; but let's also ask why we continue to tolerate an economic system that inflicts such misery on so many.

A directory of grassroots organizations in New Orleans, Biloxi, Houston and other affected areas providing immediate disaster relief to poor people and people of color can be found at <http://katrina.mayfirst.org/>



Take Back Your Time day

BY KEITH KING

Americans are not taking enough time off and are suffering dearly because of this. According to Take Back Your Time, we are working more than medieval peasants did, more than any other industrial country, and almost nine full weeks longer per year than our counterparts in Western Europe. We are stressed out, ran ragged, and worried to a frazzle, with inadequate time for relaxing with family or by oneself – for doing whatever it is we really want and need to do.

Take Back Your Time is working to bring a greater awareness of the dangers of too much work. National staff person Gretchen Berger said that while many people are suffering alone from overwork and stress, these are not individual but rather crippling cultural problems we all are facing. Our obsession with making money is ingrained in American ideologies of individualism and the possibility of limitless material gain; it is enforced through a dog-eat-dog competition for jobs and the fear of losing our incomes at any moment according to the whims of employers. Thus, subject to overwork, not having alternatives, we do as directed. Increasingly, corporations are demanding more of fewer workers.

TBYT held a conference August 4-7 at Seattle University in Washington. There were approximately 120 attendees, including people from the faith community, labor, health care workers, academics and students. Workshops were presented on changing the workplace, European alternatives, and political strategies. Round table discussions included “Which is Worse – Outsourcing or Longer Hours?” “Corporations: Their Legal Structure and Our Time,” and “Time, Militarism & Empire Building.”

Berger said this is not the first time Americans have confronted issues about control over work hours; this year is the 65th anniversary of the adoption by Congress of the 40-hour work week. (The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established the 44-hour week, which was reduced to 40 in two years.) In the same way that the citizenry said “40 is enough” years ago, it is time to continue on and declare that we cannot accept a status-quo of overwork and its attendant stresses.

October 24 has been established as “Take Back Your Time Day” because it is nine weeks from the end of the year, which represents the nine additional weeks that Americans are working as compared to workers in Western Europe. The Massachusetts Take Back Your Time Committee and the Massachusetts

Council of Churches have collaborated to sponsor the concept of “Take Four Windows of Time.” The objective is for individuals and groups to choose four periods between Labor Day and Oct. 24 to engage in activities taken at a relaxed pace and that are life-affirming. They invite people to contact them with reports of their activities, which they intend to compile and make public.

October 24 will also function as a day of celebration, during which colleges, labor organizations and churches will sponsor a wide variety of events calling attention to the time crunch.

Take Back Your Time advocates its own public policy agenda, including paid childbirth leave for all parents, at least one week of paid sick leave for workers, guaranteeing at least three weeks of yearly paid vacation leave, limiting compulsory overtime, making Election Day a holiday, and wage parity and pro-rated benefits for part-time workers. TBYT encourages those in positions of political power to embrace these concepts and is trying to generate nationwide awareness and discussion of these issues.

Gretchen Burger emphasized that TBYT is confronting larger issues of time and leisure and who has control over them. Some Americans are able to take vacation and sick leave when they want and have a great deal of control over when they work or do not work.

Yet, it is not just those privileged with large quantities of stock who deserve to live well. Many of us have no such choices and need to have these possibilities not just extended to us, but attached to our rights as working people and as human beings. Whether driving a truck, sweeping streets, cleaning, hauling trash, preparing time reports, paying bills, teaching children to read, or whatever one may do in order to survive and live, there is no replacement for our human complexity, ingenuity, flexibility, strength and compassion in getting things done.

One often hears the term “stress management” bandied about in recent years. Do we need to look for ways in which the sources of our stress – such as our lack of control over our working time, and hence our lives – can be reduced or eliminated while looking for tools to control it?

Take Back Your Time can be contacted at 206-293-3772. Their web address is www.timeday.org. Their 250-page handbook on the problem and what to do about it is available for \$14.95 from the IWW or through the timeday web site.

Longshoremen stop work in solidarity with troqueros

Picketing by 50 troqueros outside the CUT staging yard in late August caused ILWU longshoremen to walk off the job, shutting down the terminal. Los Angeles troqueros had been negotiating over conditions on the Hyundai landbridge, and were locked out when they refused to accept the Calko dispatch company's terms. Instead, the work was given to three other dispatch companies, two of which promptly quit the job when the picket lines went up. After a few hours of picketing, ILWU business agents showed up, and after learning what was up advised their members to honor the picket lines.

Before the day was over, Hyundai had given the work back to the Calko troqueros and agreed to a \$5 raise for each landbridge run. If other port workers stand with the troqueros, their long struggle for decent conditions can and will be won.

IBEW to help blacklist rebellious workers

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has promised employers that from now on IBEW members who are fired from construction sites twice in 12 months will not be referred to new jobs unless they “address the underlying reason for their termination.”

Employers say too many workers are uncooperative or miss work. Contractors are requiring workers to view a video in which contractors and IBEW officials tell workers that they are responsible for completing jobs on time and under budget, and keeping the bosses happy.

The IBEW says other construction unions have indicated they may copy the program.

For years, IBEW members have complained that employers maintained an unofficial blacklist, and that the union did nothing to defend workers who sought to defend working conditions. Now IBEW officials will require the two-strikes blacklist policy to be included in all new local construction contracts.

New anti-salting law?

Non-union construction firms are lobbying Congress to amend U.S. labor laws to allow employers to discriminate against union members in hiring and firing decisions. Such bills have been introduced for years, but this time the Associated Builders and Contractors say they are confident they can push the measure through Congress.

The ABC claims U.S. labor law is stacked against companies, which are unable to fire troublemakers because of their union affiliation and can be forced to recognize unions if a majority of their workers join. Evidently, they prefer the days of the legal blacklist, the gun thug and the company spy.

Tech workers less optimistic

A new survey released by the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers found that tech workers in America are feeling less hopeful about the future of their profession than they were two years ago. More than half said their pay had been cut or stayed the same over the last year. And workers say new jobs are harder to come by.

The survey also found that more than half (56 percent) of tech workers regularly work more than 40 hours a week, with 37 percent regularly working 50 or more hours a week.

The growing number of high-tech temporary workers make less and carry a much higher proportion of health care costs than direct employees.

Fake safety meeting used to trap immigrants

On July 6, U.S. Immigration agents arrested 49 immigrant construction workers in a raid at the Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro, North Carolina. The workers were arrested at what they were told was a mandatory Occupational Safety and Health

Administration meeting.

Allen McNeely, head of the North Carolina Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health division, blasted federal officials for the deception, which he said undermined efforts to reach out to immigrant workers – especially those in construction, who are among the most likely to be killed or injured at work. “We are dealing with a population of workers who need to know about safety,” McNeely said. “Now they're going to identify us as entrappers.”

Direct action gets goods for Brooklyn workers

BY SARAH STUTEVILLE, INDYMEDIA

Four months after the official launch of their campaign for undocumented workers' rights in Bushwick, Brooklyn, Make The Road By Walking and the “Awake Brooklyn!” campaign are celebrating two victories.

Make the Road's campaign against The Super Star 99 cent store ended when owner Khubaib Massoud capitulated to all of the workers demands after a summer of boycotts, campaigning and increased pressure from the Attorney General's office.

According to organizer Burt Picard, Massoud has agreed to re-open the store, re-hire all the previously fired workers, increase weekly pay from \$270 a week to \$440, provide workers with three paid sick days and six paid vacation days a year, and has promised not to interfere with union organizing efforts among his workers. He will also be required to pay up to \$70,000 in back wages.

On August 21, Foot Co. and New York Sneakers also agreed to a list of demands from workers, many undocumented immigrants, including a neutrality agreement promising not to fight union organizing, after Make The Road threatened to unleash their next boycott campaign against the two companies.

Court says California workers must pay for union-busting

A federal appeals court in San Francisco has struck down a California law barring employers from using money from state grants and contracts to fight off union organizing campaigns. The judges rules the statute “chills employer speech,” pushing them into a policy of neutrality. Why they think it is ok to force taxpayers to pick up the tab for anti-union campaigns is not addressed in the ruling.

San Francisco transit fight

At least 2,000 passengers responded to service cuts and fare hikes by joining a fare strike Sept. 1 on San Francisco's Muni bus system. Fares have risen 50 percent since 2003. The fare strike has three demands: No fare hike, no service cuts, no layoffs.

Fare strike groups concentrated at major nodes in the Muni bus network, with banners, strike placards, bullhorns and leaflets in Chinese, English and Spanish. Muni responded with a massive police presence

The vast value of downtown as a financial and retail center depends heavily on Muni to deposit shoppers at downtown stores and carry thousands of employees to their jobs. Two-thirds of people who go downtown each day arrive by public transit. But downtown building owners and corporations pay nothing special for this service, which is absolutely essential to their profit making.

UK: too much work

UK employment minister Gerry Sutcliffe says Britain has an unhealthy long hours culture. “While regulation has a part to play, creating a culture where we work smarter rather than longer is key...”

Despite protests from the TUC and mounting medical evidence, the government continues to defend the UK's opt-out from Europe's 48-hour working week ceiling, introduced Europe-wide in response to clear evidence that long hours were a cause of more accidents and ill health.

Long doctors' hours endanger patient health

A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* finds that 90-hour work weeks for doctors impaired performance in the same way as alcohol, concluding that it is important to ensure doctors had adequate rest. Researchers from Brown University and the University of Michigan found that trainee doctors who worked 90-hour weeks suffered performance impairment matching that of doctors those who worked “just” 44-hour weeks, but followed up their shift with three vodka and tonics in 30 minutes.

Fight for shorter Hours



Conference on work hours

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 8 hour day in Melbourne, two conferences June 20 - 23 will explore working time issues. The Working to Live conference focuses on the history of the movement in Australia, and invites proposals that “bring to life the continuing efforts of working people to gain control over their modes of employment, the labour process and to assert their role as active agents in a more egalitarian economy and democratic polity.” Information is on the Labour History web site at <http://www.asslh.com/> Send proposals by Jan. 31 to pjlove@infoxchange.net.au

A conference on contemporary issues, New Standards for the New Times?, will follow, with research papers and panels on overtime, work and family, part-time work, union strategies, international comparisons, and related questions. Proposals are due by Jan. 31 to Cathy.Brigden@rmit.edu.au.

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Review: Political economy from below

Rob Knowles, *Political Economy from Below: Economic Thought in Communitarian Anarchism, 1840–1914*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. 432 pages, \$90.00.

BY FREDERIC S. LEE

Is there such a thing as anarchist economics and therefore a history of anarchist economic thought? This is not a question for anarchists because they have long answered both aspects of the question in the affirmative. Rather the question is for economists who generally slight anarchism when discussing past and/or present critiques of capitalism.

True, the dissection of capitalism by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and many other past and present anarchists does not deviate a great deal from Marxian analysis, but that is to be expected. Starting one's analysis with classes from the point of production and a social surplus of produced goods does constrain the variety of theoretical narratives that can be told about capitalism – so why not just stick with the Marxian story? However, the Marxian critique did not emerge from nothing – it had antecedents, some of which came from Proudhon. Moreover, it downplays a number of arguments anarchists believe are important both for the critique of capitalism and for articulating the economics of the new society.

Rob Knowles' book, *Political Economy from Below*, raises this issue not to try to convince economists to study anarchist economic thought concerning capitalism, but for something quite different – to study anarchist economic thought concerning the new society. The point of the anarchist critique of capitalism is to set the background for the latter; for it is not the past or the present that excite the minds of anarchists but the transition to and the making of a new society. It is precisely this concern that many Marxists and heterodox economists want to ignore and sweep under the carpet. Thus, what is so distinctive about *Political Economy from Below* is that Knowles is solely concerned with articulating the theoretical arguments of the new society (putting aside any discussion of the transition process) advanced by Proudhon and his fellow anarchists from the 1840s up to the beginning of the Great War.

Knowles organizes the arguments in historical fashion, starting with Proudhon to whom he devotes about half the book. Proudhon is as important to anarchists as Marx is to Marxists; and moreover, much of what Proudhon has written has been distorted by Marxists. But I think the real reason is that Proudhon can be very hard to understand. Thus, Knowles devotes much time and effort to making the obscure and confusing to the uninitiated clear and sensible.

He then links Proudhon's arguments to subsequent generations of anarchist theorists, as well as incorporating their novel contributions to this growing body of theoretical arguments of the new society. Knowles does this in terms of personal connections; and through this process constructs an impressive late 19th Century social network of anarchists. Following the chapters on Proudhon are four chapters on Alexander Herzen and Bakunin, Elisee Reclus and Kropotkin, Jean Grave, and ending with Leon Tolstoy. Each chapter carefully links the individual with Proudhon. For example, Proudhon and Bakunin were friends while Bakunin and Herzen were friends; thus Herzen met Proudhon through Bakunin and Tolstoy met Proudhon through Herzen. Knowles concludes with a short summary of the significant theoretical contributions made by Proudhon *et al.* towards the economics of a new society, although his presentation does not really do them justice.

Knowles ends the book in 1914, before the cataclysm of the First World War, followed by the rise of Stalinism, fascism and the cold war that collectively eliminated anarchism as a contribution to economics and the economics of the new society. However, it is possible to draw from Knowles' book a cursory view of the anarchist economics of the new society.

Anarchist economics starts with the community, that is with the social, in which individuals are embedded in a pervasive array of ethical norms that promote equality, equity, humanism, justice, and mutual support and social interaction. In turn, the social provisioning process – the economics – of the new society is embedded in the ethical norms of the community, which means that all economic activity is simultaneously an ethically embedded social activity. Individuals and subgroups are 'driven' to 'mutual interaction' by the community ethics that promote and value it. While the community encompasses all the voluntary social and particularly economic engagements, it is not an authority that sits above them; rather the ethically driven voluntary engagements are the manifestation of the community. Consequently, there is no state, hence no private property in terms of the material means of production that underpin the social provisioning process.

Central to anarchist economics is that work or laboring activity is essential to the social provisioning process. In the new society, all individuals have the right to work, but not because it gives them a contribution claim to a particular portion of the surplus. Work enables the individual to behave ethically while socially engaging with others for the benefit of the community as a whole. Moreover work can not be dehumanizing

and alienating to the worker; rather it must contribute to the cultural, intellectual, ethical, and social capacity and enrichment of the individual. Finally, work is directed and controlled by those doing it and its objective is to produce socially useful products that are collective 'artistic' creations of the workers and are seen as beautiful by the user. Consequently, while there is specialized labor, there is no hierarchy of such activity. The surplus emerging from the interdependent collective activity is produced by the community as a whole and hence belongs to it (as opposed to any specific individual or workshop).

The concluding features of anarchist economics are that the surplus produced by the community (with each worker having only a 20-hour work week) is sufficient to provide a comfortable material well-being and an enriching social life for all; and that the surplus is distributed according to some ethical guidelines. The redirection of workers from the production of 'luxury' products for capitalists to the production of useful products for the community ensures the existence of sufficient numbers for a 20-hour work week. In addition, workers will organize and revolutionize the techniques of production to make them significantly more productive than they would ever be under capitalism. The latter feature implies that products have no prices and are not exchanged in markets. As a consequence, laboring activity also has no market value hence no wage rate. Rather the particular distribution of the surplus that occurs reflects and strengthens the ethical guidelines of the community and the social relationships among its members.

Anarchist economics may seem to many economists to be a product of madmen. Knowles' carefully argued book makes it clear that this is not the case. However outlandish the anarchist economics of Proudhon, Kropotkin and others may seem from our current vantage point, it is no less so than the references to invisible hands, self-interest, self-regulating markets and social harmony by the proponents of 'capitalist' economics in the 18th century. At least the former is possible whereas the latter is not.

Workers of Gaza unite!

BY AMIRA HASS

The Independent Workers Committees in Gaza is pressing the Palestinian Authority to indict whoever ordered that live ammunition be fired over the heads of workers and their children during a recent demonstration against school registration fees for children of workers and the unemployed, free health coverage, and cancellation of their debts for electricity and water bills.

Senior Palestinian Authority officials had told the media they would agree to the children from school fees, but when they turned up at school principals would not allow the students to attend classes until the fees were paid.

The Independent Workers' Committees evolved from protest tent camps set up by workers throughout the Gaza Strip, especially by those who lost their jobs in Israel due to the prolonged closure that began three years ago. Among the workers' grievances are procedures for handing out jobs and welfare payments as political favors, rather than on an equitable basis.

The protests have expanded to include a call for elections to the official labor unions, the leaders of which are paid by the Palestinian Authority and have not been elected in living memory. The official unions are controlled by various political organizations, and official positions are allotted accordingly.

The protesters emphasize their organizational independence, having rebuffed overtures from Hamas and other political currents. They held the Committees' founding conference December 18, electing a slate of 21 officers, including five women. Nearly 8,000 workers have joined.

Working without bosses...

continued from page 12

being a mere employee and actually managing the facility, and therefore knowing exactly how much money is coming in, how much is going out to cover expenses, and how much will be left over for wages.

At Grissinópolis, Pino's management is highly efficient thanks to her many years of experience with the company. The factory's earnings are used to pay off debts, cover expenses, and contribute to a "reserve fund" to deal with unforeseen contingencies. The remainder is distributed among the workers.

Pino meets with IPS in her "office," which is basically a desk in a warehouse space on the upper floor of the factory. Down below, 16 workers – nine women and seven men – are busy kneading, cutting, baking and packing the baked goods produced by the company, while listening to music at a much louder volume than when the bosses were around.

Each one takes home 1,300 pesos (\$445) a month, more than double the normal salary for an unskilled factory worker in the food industry. "And if we work more than eight hours, we get paid overtime," adds Pino.

Things were very different a few years back. "It was in 1998 that everything started falling apart," she recalls. One of the partners in the company, who was managing the factory at the time, made a number of bad business deals, and tried to cover up the damage by hiding cheques and other documents.

In 2000, he was replaced as manager by another partner, who was "honest but incompetent," and therefore unable to get the company back on its feet. At the time, the workers were paid in dribs and drabs and large debts built up in the form of back pay owed to workers.

"By the end they owed me two years salary," she noted, while other workers were owed between four and six months pay. "Back then there were different wage categories, and I earned a lot more," she added.

Every Friday the factory workers were paid 100 pesos. In 2002, when their wages were suddenly cut from 100 to 10 pesos a week without notice, they went on strike and occupied the factory. Pino laid down her conditions for joining them: "I'll support you 100% of the way, but I won't sleep here."

The occupation lasted seven months. The owners disappeared, and the unpaid workers slept on the factory floor among the machines. Production came to a standstill, and neighbours and workers from other factories chipped in with food and money.

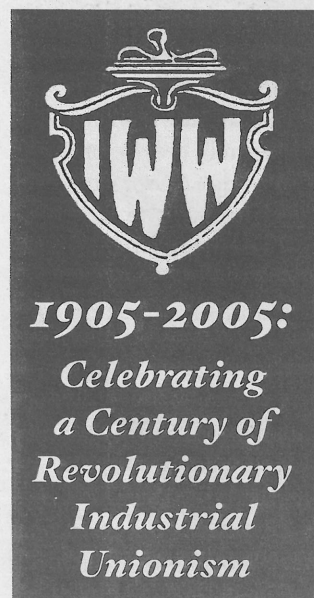
Then the workers decided to organise as a cooperative. But after successfully overcoming the legal hurdles, they were faced with "the fight for sales," said Pino. Some of the factory's regular clients had disappeared after the 2001 economic collapse, while others were now buying from the competition.

Recovery came slowly. The factory now manufactures products sold under its own brand, as well as goods produced for other companies under contracts. Two more workers eventually had to be taken on. In the meantime, the new management is fighting to keep the water from being cut off because of debts that the workers did not incur.

While speaking with IPS, Pino continues to deal with the threat of an interruption in water service, which is eventually resolved, proving that things really have changed. "I always did this work, but what's different now is that I have more responsibility, because there's no one else above me," she remarked.

Iraq seizing union assets

The Iraqi government is attempting to control union activity through a new decree seizing control of all union funds pending development of new laws governing how unions will be recognized and operate. The move comes against a background of continuing growth in union membership. One example of the growing union activity saw health care workers in the hospital and medical centres in Kirkuk organize a two-hour strike against pay cuts imposed by the Health Ministry.



conference. IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss will speak at an opening reception at 4:45 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20. Conference Oct. 20-22, Wayne State University.

Lakewood, NJ: "Workers/Draftees of the World Unite!" a multimedia presentation on IWW artist, columnist and draft resister Carlos Cortez (1923-2004) by historian Scott Bennett. Tuesday, Nov. 8, 7 p.m., Little Theater, Georgian Court University. Reservations requested.

A new edition of our official history, *The IWW: Its First 100 Years, and the 2006 IWW Calendar* are scheduled for release in October. A timeline of IWW history and other centenary materials can be found at www.iww.org/projects/centenary.

Santa Barbara, Calif: Centenary Picnic, Shoreline Park, Oct. 1, Noon - 4 p.m. Food, drink & music. info: 805.689.3086.

Ann Arbor, Mich.: "Soapboxers and Saboteurs: 100 Years of Wobbly Solidarity." Exhibit commemorating 100 years of the IWW with materials from the Labadie Collection, through Nov. 23; University of Michigan Special Collections Library. October 19: Reception featuring labor singer Anne Feeney.

Pittsburgh: 100 Years of Educating, Agitating & Organizing. Centennial celebration featuring IWW art, songs, and speakers. Saturday, Oct. 22, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Pump House (site of 1892 Homestead Massacre), Waterfront Drive.

Philadelphia: *Wobblies!* book/art exhibit, Oct. 15 - 30, Robin's Bookstore. Presentation by editor Nicole Shulman and IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss Oct. 19 at 7 p.m.

Detroit Mich.: North American Labor History Conference, focusing on the IWW's first 100 years, including sessions on organizing in Mexico, IWW internationalism, Wobbly culture, etc. An exhibit of artifacts from the IWW archives at the Reuther Labor Archives will open in conjunction with the

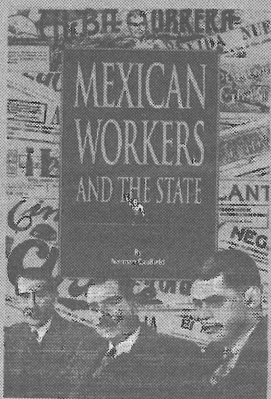
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by Norman Caulfield

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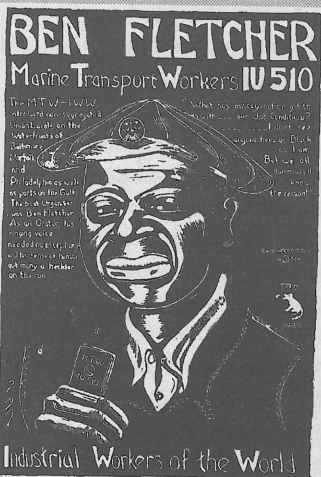
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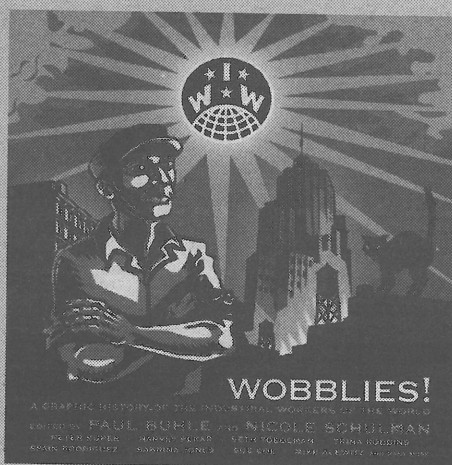
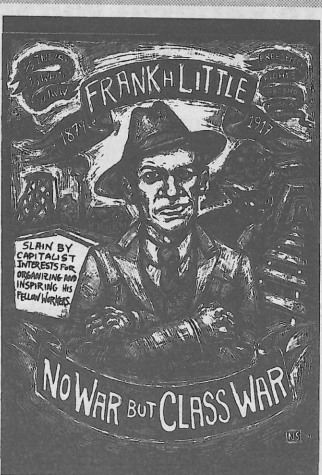
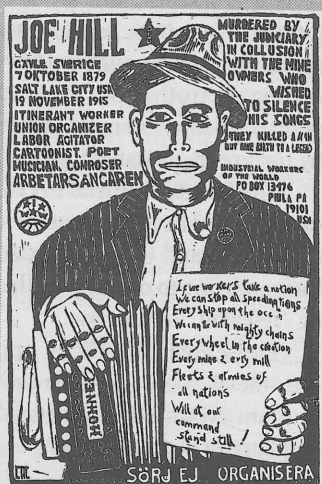
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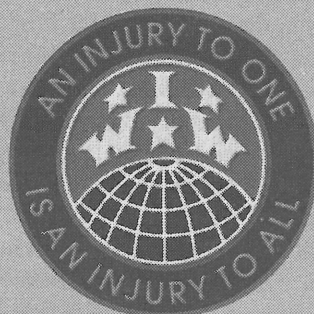
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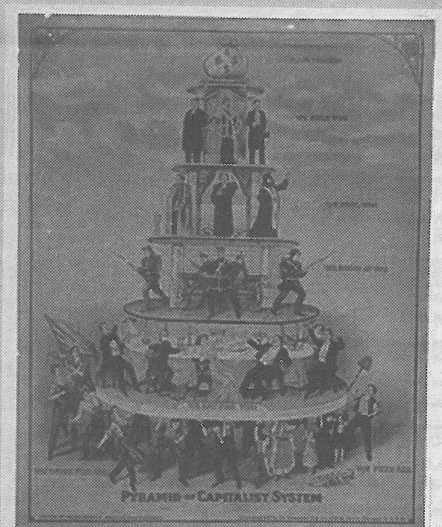
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Working without bosses

BY MARCELA VALENTE,
INTER PRESS SERVICE

Women are playing a major role in the revolutionary Argentine workers' initiative of taking over factories that have been abandoned by their owners, and in so doing rescuing jobs and salaries that seemed to have been lost forever.

"You can't cut off our water, we've paid all our bills," Maria Pino protests over the phone, while using her free hand to rifle through a stack of papers on a nearby shelf, searching for the folder of receipts from the Aguas Argentinas water company.

Pino has worked at the Grissinópoli baked goods company in Buenos Aires for 33 years. She was the "right-hand woman" of a succession of company presidents who ran the business from the height of prosperity into total ruin. Today, although she earns the same wages as the company's 16 factory floor workers, she holds the reins of this newly successful business, albeit one faced with the burden of old debts.

Grissinópoli is a member of the National Movement of Factories Recovered by Workers, a collective of some 80 companies formed in the late 1990s to group together bankrupted businesses that had been abandoned by their owners, but not by their employees.

The movement encompasses manufacturing and services industries hit by the four-year recession that began in 1998 and culminated in 2001 with the economic, social and political collapse that brought down the government of President Fernando de la Rúa.

As well as factories producing everything from textiles, ceramics, glass and rubber to food and refrigerators, the network includes transportation companies, educational facilities and even hospitals. Most of them are headed up by men, but in some cases, the horizontal organisational structure has helped women move into leading roles.

The "recovered" factories are organised as cooperatives, with licences to operate. Legal permission to take over their operation was obtained by presenting viability studies to the courts handling the bankruptcy proceedings, or by applying to provincial legislatures to request their expropriation.

The salaries drawn by the workers are called "returns." Everyone earns the same wages, which are divided up in accordance with the income taken in that month. Decisions are adopted by majority vote in regularly scheduled assemblies.

The Brukman textile factory, abandoned by its owners in late 2001, currently employs 62 people, of whom 50 are women. Before the owners finally fled the heavily indebted company, it had reached the point where the women working there were paid a mere five pesos, or \$2, a week.

The struggle to keep the factory from being shut down permanently dragged on until late 2003, and led to clashes with the police, forced evictions, and attempts to manipulate the protest for political purposes.

Finally, through successful organisation and a series of appeals to the courts, the women were able to get the factory back up and running normally.

In the interim, three factory workers became pregnant and gave birth, and the other women raised funds to cover their medical expenses and maternity leaves. Now each worker takes home around 600 pesos (\$205) a month, and new staff are being hired.

The president of the cooperative is Elena Caliba. Her position does not entail working any less than the others or receiving a higher salary, nor is she authorised to adopt any decisions on her own.

"It means a lot more responsibility, because as well as working (on the machines), we have to deal with all the accounting, paperwork and sales," she told IPS.

The company is finally out of the red. "Every time we make a sale, first we cover expenses and taxes, and then we divide up the rest," she explained.

A similar situation was described by Lili-ana Correndo, from the cooperative formed to recover the Israelite Hospital in Buenos Aires. Founded in the early 1990s, the hospital received donations from the Jewish community throughout many decades, and at one time employed 1,200 people. But in the 1990s, a series of poor management decisions gradually ran it into the ground, while charitable contributions dried up.

In 2004, the courts declared the hospital bankrupt. "At that point there were 400 of us working here, but a lot of people left; at the time the cooperative was created, there were less than 160," recalled Correndo, who was and continues to be an administrative employee at the hospital. Since then, the staff has grown to a total of almost 250 workers.

The cooperative was formed by nurses, lab technicians, and cleaning and administrative staff. The vast majority of them are women. "The doctors are not members of the cooperative, they're employees ... and earn more than we do," noted Correndo.

After the doctors' fees, debt payments, taxes and expenditures on supplies are covered, there is enough left over for each employee to take home up to 150 pesos (around \$50) a week, at most. "But in a few months we'll start earning between 250 and 300 pesos a week, which will be amazing," remarked Correndo.

Between 2003 and 2004, the employees of the Israelite Hospital worked for almost a year without pay, even though the hospital had been declared bankrupt and they had officially been laid off. But despite the bankruptcy, the abandonment by its directors and the lack of salaries, the hospital continued to provide its urgently needed services.

Correndo does not believe that this hospital is run better simply because there are women in charge. She knows that the threat of corruption is ever present. But she also knows that there is a big difference between

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Attack on Australian workers' rights continues

The Australian senate has passed the so-called Building Industry Improvement Act, drastically undermining the industrial rights of building workers and leaving them open to fines and imprisonment if they refuse to divulge details of union meetings to a government agency set up to 'police the industry.' The law also gives employers the right to sue unions and individual workers for damages if they take industrial action to block projects on environmental or other grounds. The new Australian Building and Construction Commissioner could also seek fines against the union of \$110,000 per breach and individual workers of \$22,000 per breach.

Thirty years ago, construction workers joined forces with community groups, imposing Green Bans on highways, prisons and "urban redevelopment" projects that weren't up to standard, bringing many objectionable projects to a halt. The government responded by de-registering the BLF, the union most actively involved in Green Bans, and there have been only a handful of such bans in recent years.

Under the new legislation, all such activities will now be illegal. As a result, construction union officials have now rediscovered the proud legacy of Green Bans and worker militancy that they once worked to defuse.

Meanwhile, in Victoria construction unions are abandoning their decade-old

policy of shutting down construction sites for a day when a worker is killed on the job. The CFMEU agreed to the change under pressure from the government, which has prosecuted firms for paying workers' wages during the actions. When the policy was adopted, workers were dying every month on construction jobs; today the death rate is much lower - showing the efficacy of hitting the bosses where it hurts, in their wallets.

The federal government is preparing an AUS\$20 million advertising campaign in an attempt to sell a sweeping package of "industrial reforms" that would strip most workers of protections including those against arbitrary firing, mandatory overtime, and bonuses for night and weekend work.

The widely unpopular "reforms" would retain workers' eligibility for 10 sick days a year, but in a series of secret focus groups voters said the government's planned propaganda campaign left them cold. Unions say the government should pay for the propaganda campaign out of party, not public funds.

UK unions pledge general strike vs. pension scheme

Leaders of 13 British unions have said they will launch a general strike if the "Labour" government presses ahead with plans to raise the retirement age for public sector workers to 65.



Sweden to send Iranian unionist to torture regime

BY LARS-ERIK MORIN, SAC

Rabi Nikoo, an Iranian union activist and refugee in Sweden, will be deported with his wife and children to the Islamist regime of Iran unless international solidarity persuades the Swedish government to reconsider.

Nikoo has spent five years in Iranian prisons for organizing strikes and other labor activities. If returned, he fears the regime will torture him in an effort to learn the identities of underground labor activists.

According to the authorities, he has not proven that the Iranian regime knows about his activity and so he is not in danger. However, since fleeing Iran he has given several interviews (which have been broadcast in several countries, and are available on the internet) in which he discusses his role in organizing strikes against the regime and revealing the truth about the Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi who was killed by torture in an Iranian prison.

The Swedish official overseeing the case says it would be too expensive to translate the interviews, and (when translators offered to find someone to do the job) that it would not be "relevant" to the case.

Please email the Aliens' Appeal Board and the official in charge of the case urging them to grant Nikoo's asylum request: un@un.se and harriet.ohman@un.se

16 garment workers get 3-year jail sentences

A Bangladesh court has sentenced 16 garment workers to three years' rigorous imprisonment for their role in the occupation of a Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority office in April. More than 1,500 workers seized the office April 10, following an industrial dispute at the Honorway Textiles and Apparels factory. Authorities say that furniture was damaged and windows broken during the protest.

The workers were also fined Tk 2,000 each, and will be imprisoned an additional six months if they are unable to pay. Workers told *The Daily Star* that they were implicated

in the case to divert attention from the criminal misconduct of the owners of the factory. "Our family members will starve following the judgement," they said.

Aussa workers win

The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo of Spain reports that after 117 days on strike, emergency roadside assistance workers in Seville have won an agreement with the privatized Aussa firm that reinstates dismissed workers, withdraws discipline against union activists, and improves working conditions.

Nestle unionist murdered

BY EDGAR PAEZ M.

Colombian unionist Luciano Enrique Romero Molina, a leader of the Sinaltrainal union, was kidnapped in the city of Valledupar the evening of Sept. 10. His dead body, which had been stabbed more than 40 times, was found the next day.

Romero worked for 20 years at Nestlé - Cirolac before he was fired Oct. 22, 2002, for union activity. He has fought for reinstatement through the courts ever since.

Romero was Sinaltrainal's representative on the Foundation Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners, and spent several months in exile after death threats before returning to Colombia earlier this year under a government protection program.

Romero was 47 years old. He leaves four children and his partner Ledys Mendoza.

Luciano Enrique Romero Molina has joined the long list of assassinated union leaders in Colombia, carried out by state terrorism and through the paramilitaries unleashed by the corporations to exterminate unions. These groups continue massacring the unarmed population with impunity while the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez continues its deceitful "peace process."

Send protests to: Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Presidente de la República de Colombia (auribe@presidencia.gov.co) and Dr. Carlos Franco, Director del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y de Derecho Internacional Humanitario (cefranco@presidencia.gov.co). Copies should be sent to sinaltrainal@sinaltrainal.org.